Reviewer’s report

Title: A Systematic Review of Symptom Assessment Scales in Children with Cancer

Version: 1 Date: 19 May 2012

Reviewer: Xin Shelley S Wang

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Major Compulsory Revisions:

The paper reviewed an important research area that has been ignored but much needed in pediatric oncology care. Indeed that there is a great need to establish symptom assessment tool in this population. However, to fully contribute to the topic, this paper is missing some important information.

1. There is no review criterion to separate the availability of single symptom assessment tools and tools for multiple symptom assessment. For example, for screening purpose, perhaps pain scales been used most, not been reviewed in pediatric care in this paper. Given that multi symptom assessment is only getting more research attention in recent ten years, pain assessment has been the leading symptom for both measurement and management in past two decades, it is worth for an introduction of single symptoms (or clearly defined clinical conditions) assessment tools to readers, such as for pain, for fatigue, and for GI symptoms.

2. For multiple symptom assessment tools, HRQOL tools always included some important symptom items, either a subscale to company with functioning scales or been the part of tool. For example, QoL tools often include items as author identified 5 most common symptoms form symptom tools. Although the ideal items for comprehensive symptom assessment in pediatric cancer patients have not been identified, this precious resource on both items selection and symptom prevalence data from QoL measures cannot be ignored for pediatric symptom research history. For example, peds-FAACT for cachexia related QoL for pediatric cancer patients; PedsQL; PCQL-32, and so on. It’ll be more convincing for including these data on this review.

Minor Essential Revisions:

1. It’ll be very helpful if author could add a column for introducing the name of symptom items by each tool on Table 1.

Level of interest: An article of limited interest

Quality of written English: Needs some language corrections before being published
Statistical review: No, the manuscript does not need to be seen by a statistician.

Declaration of competing interests:

I declare that I have no competing interests.